

A web site specifically designed to attract and learn about youth living in a defined community.

OVERVIEW

Implementing a youth web site is an exciting and difficult undertaking. It is thrilling to build a tool that can serve both a youth worker's and local young people's exact, respective needs. A web site developer has the ability to creatively choose the type and format of information presented. Still, web site design can be difficult, and it is often time consuming.

This article briefly surveys many issues in web site design, including the basic requirements for creating a web site; various web site designs available; ideas for creating a youth page, including a survey; and web site maintenance and survey evaluation.

Additional resources can provide much more in-depth information. Just a few of the countless texts written explicitly to help individuals and businesses set-up their own web site are listed in the Resource List for this topic. As you choose a source, seek one that accommodates your level of computer expertise. Also, because of the rapidly changing nature of the computer industry, select a book or program that is written as recently as possible. Further, it may help to choose a text that comes with software, to aid in the production and design process.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

There are some basic computer requirements order to produce, support, and maintain a web site. As of the writing of this paper, the necessary computer hardware includes a 586/90 machine, 64 MB RAM, a 2-GB hard drive, and a 56 kbps or higher modem. These specs will serve a site that can have 15 or more simultaneous users. Additionally, a platform such as Windows NT Server or UNIX will be needed, a Internet Service Provider (ISP) must be selected, and a specific phone line must be installed. Once again, refer to a recent text for the most current requirements.

WEB SITE DESIGNS

In planning the design of the youth web site, it is important to not only have a idea of what the web site will provide (its function), but also of what it will look like (its form). There are several different basic web site forms: hierarchical, linear, or web style. The hierarchical design has a treelike structure, where each page allows users to dig deeper into a category without the opportunity to change categories. The linear approach leads users from screen to screen, much like reading a book or magazine. The most utilized structure for web sites, the web style structure, links each page to several other pages in a variety of categories and sub-categories. Any of these forms may be used; choose one that will allow the user to navigate the site most quickly and easily. For the example, a web style structure was chosen.

WEB SITE IDEAS

Create a web site which will allow you to obtain information about the youth community and serve them as best as you can. To gather information, consider asking each user to complete a simple, quick survey. Further, to serve youth, design an attractive web site with pertinent information. Perhaps,

envision it as a school newspaper for entire youth community. It should include news from and about youth, an editorial column, and sections on entertainment, sports, events, survey results.

The collection of youth data can be a challenge. The goal is to gather data once and only once from each young person in the community. If someone provides their personal information more than once, it affects the accumulated body of data. Therefore, develop a method of allowing youth to access the page as many times as they wish while only inputting their personal information once. A possible solution to this dilemma is a simple entry requirement for each visit: each young person completes the survey during their initial visit to the site, and for each additional visit, they simply provide a username and password.

The survey should be easy to understand and complete. Practically any information can be asked, but all questions should be posed in a way to yield multiple choice answers or one-word typed answers. This will not only make the survey easier to complete, but should also aid in the data evaluation process. See the sample survey at the end of this discussion.

To actually create a page, refer to materials designed specifically for this task. Such resources will help for using a computer language called HTML or Java to construct the pages of the site. Due to their complex technical nature, no attempt is made to go through these steps in this paper.

WEB SITE MAINTENANCE AND SURVEY EVALUATION

The maintenance of a web site can be as regular, irregular, often, or seldom as one wishes. Of course, the more often the site is updated, the more attractive and useful the pages become. More important in terms of consistency is the process of retrieving and evaluating survey data. Data should be retrieved and tabulated often, to provide the most accurate, up-to-date information. In addition, it is important to remove records and retabulate data as each new school year begins. One caution for the use of data from the web site surveys concerns the nature of the youth responding. At the time of this writing, the popularity of the Internet is growing at an incredible rate. However, access to it is still relatively limited to the middle and upper class populations. Public schools and libraries are beginning to grant public access, but most people still have no opportunity or knowledge to get on the Internet. However, as with all trends and new technologies, in time, more and more people can be expected to use the Internet.

SAMPLE YOUTH WEB SITE SURVEY

What follows are some typical questions you might ask on a youth web page:

Welcome to the Slippery Rock Youth Page!!!

To enter this page for the first time, please complete the following short survey. However, if you have completed this survey in the past, please provide your username and password.

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